



HOW TO MAKE YOUR MESSAGE MEMORABLE

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YOU ARE THE MESSAGE

Whether your audience is high tech, low tech or no tech — they want to connect with YOU. The key to your success as a speaker is your ability to share yourself with your audience. What keeps most people from doing this is the “F” word: it’s **FEAR**.

The Gallup Poll always rates speaking in public among the greatest fears of most Americans — often ahead of death! Mindless, numbing fear is the enemy of every speaker. We are so afraid of making a fool of ourselves in public that most people bring a ‘stranger’ to the podium — not their full, authentic selves.

Many vibrant, interesting, likable people become stiff, formal, careful and overly cautious when they step in front of a group. In trying to be ‘right’ and *not* make a mistake, they lose their greatest asset — **THEIR INDIVIDUALITY**. Why is this so important? Because **INDIVIDUALITY LEADS TO LIKEABILITY** and likeability is the secret weapon of every good speaker. It’s what some call “star quality” but it is not limited to celebrities.

There is no ‘right’ way to make a presentation. There is *your* way — if you have the wisdom and courage to use it. Good speakers don’t hide their individuality. They capitalize on it.

CONSIDER SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL SPEAKERS OF THE PAST CENTURY

Winston Churchill

Franklin D. Roosevelt

John F. Kennedy

Ronald Reagan

Ann Richards

Barack Obama

Oprah Winfrey

Rush Limbaugh

Joel Osteen

Adolf Hitler

ADOLF HITLER

This crazed dropout and failed artist used his evil but amazing abilities as a speaker to catapult himself from obscurity to Chancellor of Germany. In less than seven years of achieving that office, he had mesmerized one of the most cultured nations on earth and begun the bloodiest war of modern times.



RONALD REAGAN

President Reagan was an actor whose best days were supposedly behind him when he gave a half-hour television speech in support of the presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater in the fall of 1964. The speech was such a sensation, despite LBJ's landslide victory, that within days California Republicans were talking of Ronald Reagan for Governor. Two years later, he defeated Pat Brown, a two-term incumbent. Fourteen years later, he defeated an incumbent president, Jimmy Carter, and went to the White House. He owed his success to his warm personality, speaking skills and ease in front of the camera.



BARACK OBAMA

A 43-year-old named Barack Obama, was given twenty-five minutes as the keynote speaker at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. He was largely unknown, an Illinois state senator and candidate for the U.S. Senate. His dynamic speech put him on the map. Even before he was elected to the senate that fall, people were talking about him as a possible candidate for the presidency. He must have been listening to them as he announced his candidacy for President two years later and was inaugurated in January 2009.



WHAT DO ALL THESE DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS HAVE IN COMMON?

Not race, gender, background, class, religion or ideology. The only trait they share is their *individuality*.



Good speakers are never bland, dull or careful. They allow their uniqueness to show. They realize that gray is not a primary color. They know that connecting with the audience is key to having your message accepted and remembered.

Audiences will leave with a *feeling* about the speaker — positive or negative — and it will color their feeling about you, your company, cause, idea, business or product. If they leave with a positive feeling about you, they are likely to remember one or two of your major points, and possibly read your handout. More importantly, if you deliver a powerful call to action, they are more likely to *act*.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR INDIVIDUALITY

NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE SPEAKER

- ✓ **EYE CONTACT** — Look at your audience not at the ceiling, floor, notes or slides.
- ✓ **BODY LANGUAGE** — Have the same kind of body language you would use in telling a friend about an exciting ball game, movie or vacation.
- ✓ **VOCAL VARIETY** — When you are genuinely enthusiastic about something you have natural vocal variety. You will get excited, talk with animation, and won't worry about punctuation. *You will be authentic* and that's what audiences like — especially when you are talking about their biggest investment, their home.
- ✓ **SMILE** — Start with a smile. Find reasons to smile during your presentation and — when appropriate — end with a smile. If you look like you're in pain or working hard to get through the presentation, the audience will be in pain as well.
- ✓ **ENERGY** — Nervousness is natural. The goal is to channel it into positive energy about your subject. Don't worry about going too far. You are unlikely to be *too* energetic.
- ✓ **HUMOR** — Laughter is always welcome — especially when it's based on your own experience. Reagan was always kidding himself about his age. He once opened a State of the Union address with 100 million people watching by talking about the Constitutional Convention that occurred 200 years earlier. He said, "I know all about it because I was there!" He took a potential liability, his age, and used it to create a positive feeling.
- ✓ **GOOD TASTE** — Always make sure that your humor or ad-libs are in good taste. My simple rule is: *when in doubt, don't!* You can't get in trouble for what you didn't say. And please don't repeat jokes you found on the Internet. We've already seen them. Besides, jokes tell us nothing about *you*. They are canned; whereas real stories help reveal the speaker's personality and help you connect.
- ✓ **SPONTANEITY** — When something unexpected happens, use it to your advantage. Play the moment and ad-lib. The audience will love it because they know it wasn't in your notes.
- ✓ **INTENSITY** — This is not the same as volume. It may be loud, medium range or a whisper. It could include a pause. Intensity is verbal italics. It gives emphasis to what you're saying and makes people want to listen.

- ✓ **PAUSES** — A well-placed pause builds interest and suspense. Pauses also give the audience a chance to absorb your thoughts and catch their breath.
- ✓ **MOVEMENT** — You can move whenever there is a good reason to move. Or you can stand in one spot and use body language. Or both. You *should not move* unless there is a clear reason to move. That makes you look nervous and aimless and we wonder what you are doing.



How we use our natural resources is what makes us who we are. They can make us powerful, dynamic and immensely effective. In a misguided effort to be ‘right’ or not make a mistake, many speakers leave their natural resources behind when they start speaking. But not good speakers.

HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE LIKEABILITY?

- ✓ Use your all your natural resources effectively. They are like the keyboard on a piano. Don’t just play ten keys. Use all of them.
- ✓ Ronald Reagan was called the “Teflon President” — and his Teflon was likeability. No matter how many factual misstatements he made at press conferences, the public didn’t hold it against him. Why? Because they liked him. And we tend to forgive the people we like. We turn their ‘flaws’ into charming eccentricities.
- ✓ Learn to make complex points by telling stories that reach a wide audience. *Tell a story — make a point.*
- ✓ Lincoln not only wrote brilliant speeches such as the Gettysburg Address, but was a gifted storyteller who could keep his friends laughing and hold juries in the palm of his hand.
- ✓ Franklin D. Roosevelt came into office just as most people owned a radio and used the new medium brilliantly to hold fireside chats that made him seem like a friend to Americans all over the country. Through these short talks, he created a bond with the people. It must have worked because he was elected four times in succession.
 - In early 1941, Franklin Roosevelt explained the immense complexities of the highly controversial, possibly unconstitutional, Lend-Lease Act by which we “lent” Great Britain ships before we got into World War II. To explain this unprecedented action, he gave his vast radio audience a simple analogy. He said, “If your neighbor’s home was on fire and he didn’t have a hose to fight it, would you sell him the hose or lend him the hose?”
 - Most listeners said to themselves, “Of course, we’d lend him the hose.” Roosevelt went on to say that Britain’s house was on fire and we had the “hose” they needed in old, unused ships that could carry food to the starving island. No matter their educational level, everyone listening could understand FDR’s example. Americans wrote their congressmen by the millions and the Lend-Lease Act passed the House by a vote of 203 to 202. Great Britain was saved because FDR knew how to take a complex issue and state it in powerful, understandable language.
 - Today, Lincoln and Roosevelt would be masters of social media.



The secret of creating likeability and making your points memorable is to wrap them in stories, anecdotes and ‘word pictures’. By tying a personal story or business experience to major points, you form a connection that lodges in the heart as well as in the head.

THINK YOU DON'T HAVE ANY INTERESTING STORIES? OF COURSE, YOU DO!

- ✓ If you have co-workers or clients, you have material.
- ✓ If you've spoken to civic and professional groups, you have had all kinds of experiences — some good, some challenging and some funny.
- ✓ If you share your own experiences or mistakes and how you learned from them, you have a powerful tool to connect with an audience.
- ✓ If you have a spouse, children, grandchildren, a significant other, neighbors, relatives, in-laws or pets you have lots of material and some of it can be tied to a point in a presentation.



Our lives are filled with stories yearning to be told. Most of us never use them in our presentations because we think no one would be interested or we don't want to become vulnerable. Our “communication gold” remains un-mined because we are reluctant to share it.

Audiences connect with us when we reveal ourselves and share our stories. They are more interested in our struggles than our triumphs. And they love self-deprecating humor. You can't go wrong in kidding yourself.

MAKE A FEW POINTS WELL — NOT MANY POINTS BADLY

You can cover as many points as you want, but 99% of your audience will only remember one or two points — *if you do a good job*. Most speakers attempt to cover far too much material. They introduce five to ten major points in a 30 to 40-minute presentation. Audiences can't remember that much information. That's why God created handouts!

Focus on **KEY POINTS** and etch them indelibly in your listeners' minds by using stories, anecdotes and word pictures. Include these key points in short phrases in your slide decks and in bold in your handouts.

Even if you are forced to give many points and details, find a way to emphasize and repeat your key points. Joel Osteen, who draws 25,000 people each Sunday — plus millions on television — makes **ONE KEY POINT** per sermon, but he drives it home twenty different ways.

Examples: “If you remember nothing else from this presentation, I want you to remember *{Key Point}*.” “If you do nothing else after you leave here today, I want you to go home and *{call to action}*.”

THE FEELING YOU CREATE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE FACTS YOU RECITE

Saying something once is not enough. You must make your key points powerful, colorful and personal — *and you must repeat them*. Prove this to yourself. Think of the last speech, sermon or presentation you heard. Now try to remember two major points the speaker made. Okay, how about one? If you can remember one point, you are way ahead of most people. You want your audiences to leave your talk remembering your key points, and motivated to act.



“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

— Maya Angelou

A.T.O. — ACKNOWLEDGE THE OBVIOUS

During a presentation, turn the unexpected to your advantage. Often the greatest opportunity to be likeable may come when something unanticipated happens.

When the power fails

Fire alarms go off

The sound system self-destructs

There is a wedding party next door

Audio visual does not function

Waiters drop trays

Babies wail

Or something goes ‘wrong’ — this is your

Cell phones ring

chance to be spontaneous, witty or just plain human

If a dog wanders into the room during the middle of your speech, every eye in the room will be on the dog. Acknowledge the obvious, have some fun with the dog, and then ask someone to gently escort the pooch from the room and you can move on. However, if you try to ignore what is obvious to everyone you will look foolish and miss a chance to win points for being human and showing spontaneity.

When something unexpected happens, the audience is rooting for you. When the podium collapses or the pregnant woman in the second row goes into labor, they’re saying to themselves: “Thank goodness I’m not up there!” So, if you handle the situation with a touch of grace, you win respect from the audience.



There are no disasters unless you choose to treat them as such. Your attitude and response can turn a so-called ‘disaster’ into an unforgettable moment that cements your humanity and likeability.

SHARE YOUR PASSION AS WELL AS YOUR DATA

When you connect to a subject that you care about deeply — such as saving energy — it transforms you. Suddenly, you forget about how you look or sound and become totally involved in communicating something important to your audience.

THINGS TO DO IN A PRESENTATION

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- ✓ Do your homework. Find out as much as you can about your audience *before* you prepare your speech. The more you know about them, the more specific you can be and the more you can customize your presentation.
- ✓ Talk to the person in charge of the group and find out all you can about the size, background, age range and interests of the group. Tailor your talk — and your key points — specifically to that group. You will talk differently to realtors than to a professional group or a Rotary Club. One size does NOT fit all.
- ✓ Does the group have issues that relate to your business, issue or cause?
- ✓ The more you know ahead of time, the better prepared you'll be for questions, complaints and finding allies to make your case.

REHEARSE — Almost every problem I've had in speaking can be traced directly to a lack of preparation. If it's been a month since you've spoken, you need to go through the talk at home. "Winging it" is not a good option. If Winston Churchill — who many consider the finest speaker of the 20th century — spent up to twelve hours rehearsing for his major speeches, then we need to spend at least thirty minutes to an hour.

ARRIVE EARLY — This will give you time to check out the room, set up your audio visual and make sure it is working well, assess the noise level and determine if you need a mike, check to see if the mike is working, meet the person who is introducing you and hand him the introduction you have written, and meet the people in the group.

HANDOUTS — match your slide deck and distribute directly after the speech. If you hand them out beforehand, you may look out at a group that is reading rather than listening to you.

REFINE AND MEMORIZE KEY POINTS — the two to three key points you intend to make and drive home relentlessly. Saying it once is not enough. Record *Meet the Press* or *Face the Nation* or watch a Presidential press conference and observe how the truly effective presenters take their key talking points and repeat them — in different ways — throughout the interview. People need repetition, word pictures and stories to understand your points and remember them.

THINGS NOT TO DO IN A PRESENTATION

DO NOT OPEN WITH A CANNED JOKE

They have probably heard it. You are probably not the world's best joke teller. And it tells them nothing about you. Better to share a story about your kids or grandkids, or something real that happened at work, in the world or at home. Instead, you might say:

"I've only got 30 minutes and don't want to waste one of them. Today I'm going to tell you how to save at least \$500 each year on your energy bill." (Pause ... and let that sink in.) "Then we'll talk about how to make your home more comfortable now and more valuable if you plan to sell it."

NOW YOU'VE GOT MY ATTENTION!

You could use a visual gimmick like counting out \$500 in fifties or hundreds and putting the bills in the hands of an audience member. That is the amount they would save and it's a dramatic visual that makes your point and you can have fun with. NOTE: Be sure to get your money back!

DO NOT USE TECHNICAL TERMS OR INDUSTRY JARGON WITHOUT EXPLAINING THE TERMS FIRST

Never assume that your audience knows anything about a subject just because it is a part of your daily conversation at the office. If you are going to use a technical term, define it in a parenthetical phrase. Try to avoid corporate speak such as "asset base" or "incentivize." The average human being does not use these words.

Talk as you would to a good friend with a typical high school education. Your language should reflect human values, not techno-jargon. If you're speaking to fellow techies, that's all right ... but not with the rest of us.



When the notoriously silent President Calvin Coolidge was asked what he thought about sin, he said: "I'm against it." That's how I feel about jargon, acronyms and in-house lingo.

DO NOT USE CLICHÉS

Avoid the temptation of using the buzzword of the month. Ask yourself: *"If everyone else says it, why would I want to?"* Examples of overused corporate clichés include:

World class

State of the art

Empowerment

Paradigm shift

Our employees are our most valuable resource

Tipping point

THE BUCK STOPS HERE

If something goes wrong, **never** lose your cool, get upset or blame someone else. Always take responsibility for the mistake, deal with it candidly, use humor if appropriate and move on. A.T.O. (Acknowledge the Obvious) and they'll love you for being human.

USE SLIDE DECKS IN MODERATION. YOU CANNOT 'HIDE' BEHIND YOUR SLIDES

Even the most expensive, color-coordinated, graphically brilliant slides will not save a badly delivered talk. No one ever left a presentation saying: *"Wow! Those were great slides!"* They leave saying, *"Wow, he was a terrific speaker!"*

COMER'S COMMANDMENTS FOR AUDIO-VISUAL EFFECTIVENESS

- ✓ The audience is there to connect with you, not your slides.
- ✓ Use slick decks sparingly. Bad slides have put more people to sleep than Ambien.
- ✓ Do not read your slides. It's insulting and boring.
- ✓ Don't turn your back to the audience as you gaze at your slides. Know them.
- ✓ Always use a remote-control clicker. Do not use your computer manually as you'll lose eye contact with the audience.
- ✓ Visual aids should not be a communal eye exam. Limit the copy and use large font sizes.
- ✓ Better yet, use pictures, videos and cartoons.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- ✓ Leave time for the audience to ask you questions.
- ✓ Repeat the question before you answer, so that everyone can hear it.
- ✓ If an audience member tries to lead you into some area of controversy, gently but firmly steer the subject back to your topic.
- ✓ If you are using a microphone, make sure the questioner holds it where he or she can be heard.
- ✓ If you don't know the answer to a question, *do not try to fake it*. Be candid and say you don't know, but that you'll get back to them as soon as possible with an answer. Or – if there's someone on your team that is likely to know the answer, have that person respond to the question.
- ✓ If someone has had a bad experience with your organization or industry, hear the person out. Don't interrupt or be defensive. If the questioner goes over the top, the audience will know it and give you points for patience and courtesy. At the same time, don't let one person take over the meeting. Thank them politely and move on to the next question.

- ✓ If someone asks a question that is off the subject, ask the questioner to speak to you after the meeting.
- ✓ If a person tries to ask a second question before others have been heard, tell him you'll get back to him when everyone has had a chance to ask their questions. If you run out of time, stay after the presentation to answer every question.

AT THE END OF A MEETING

- ✓ Make sure you have your business cards and handouts available.
- ✓ Let them know the kind of information that is available on the website and repeat the web address.
- ✓ Thank your host and stay around for individual questions.